

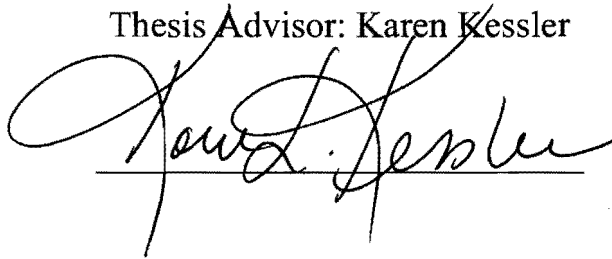
Lovers, Liars, and Clowns

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Kessler", is written over a horizontal line.

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Abstract

In my honors thesis project, *Lovers, Liars, and Clowns*, I set out to create an original piece of art that would feature some of Sondheim's finest songs, while simultaneously telling a brand new story using new dialogue and new characters. Theatre is an art form based on creation and collaboration. This was at the very core of the process of my cast and crew. We selected the musical pieces, created the story, wrote the text, blocked the scenes, choreographed the dances, designed the sets, and much more! It truly was a labor of love. This experience is the capstone of my undergraduate career because it incorporated all of the facets of theatre that I have studied while in school. As the director, I was able to utilize my knowledge as a musical theatre artisan as well as infusing the rehearsal process with my experience in stagecraft, costuming, and make-up. *Lovers, Liars, and Clowns* is the best demonstration of my knowledge of the theatre thus far in my career and I am proud to present it as my Honors Thesis Project. In my binder, I have included a CD of music from which we drew our inspiration, our original script, a poster, an explanation of the process, a program, an archive photo CD, and a DVD of our final dress rehearsal.

Lovers, Liars, and Clowns is a simple story. It is the story of one man and his relationships with three women: his fiancé, his best friend, and a one-night-stand. Though these seem like archetypal stock character labels, these characters were fully developed and infused with the personalities of the women playing the roles. This is a story of self-exploration, self-acceptance, and self-realization. It is a coming of age story that juxtaposes the simplicity of the human desire to find love with the complexity of relationships and romantic situations as a young adult.

Acknowledgements:

- I would like to thank Karen Kessler and Michael Daehn for their support and guidance on this journey.
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- Finally, I would like to thank Bobby Richards and Ethan Mathias for their hard work on music and script writing. Without them I am not sure any of this would have been possible.

My name is Kaitlin Fumarolo, and I am an Honors Student majoring in Musical Theatre. *Lovers, Liars, and Clowns*, my honors thesis project, was truly a labor of love. It was quite a journey and in this brief introduction, I will describe the successes and obstacles my cast and I had to overcome.

Last spring, the application process for directing a production in Ball State University's Cave Theatre began. Though I am predominantly a performer, I was inspired to apply. In filling out the application, the big decision was selecting the perfect show. Ultimately, I decided on Jason Robert Brown's *Songs for a New World*. I submitted my application (which is included), which outlined my production concept for the show, and then, I waited for a response. Theatre faculty members reviewed the submissions, approved my application, and scheduled an interview for me. The interview consisted of discussing concepts, casting, and effective collaboration. It went very well, and soon after, I received notice that I had been granted a directing slot in the Ball State University Cave Theatre. I was *ecstatic*! However, right before summer break began, I received a disturbing email that informed me that I could not do *Songs for a New World*. The situation had changed because shows in the Mainstage Season take priority over the student-directed cave shows. *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, a Mainstage show, had lost some male cast members due to poor grades, so several male students were added to the cast; this left me without the talent needed to sing some of the songs in my selected show. When I read that email my stomach dropped. I realized that I was back at step one. The Theatre Department faculty informed me that I could select a new show over the summer, and that I needed to let them know about my selection as soon as possible.

with their own personalities which made them more than stock characters; it successfully made them truly identifiable human beings experiencing life through this story.

Though we were still going by the title of *Side by Side by Sondheim*, it became evident that we had written and created a show that stood alone. After many meetings and much deliberation, the name *Side by Side by Sondheim* was pulled, and we were left with the job of naming our show. We decided on *Lovers, Liars, and Clowns*--a lyric from Sondheim's "Comedy Tonight." This lyric reflected the roles that seem to be universal in the relationships of young adults that we were exploring in our show.

The creation process consisted of musical rehearsals, story lining, improvisational rehearsals, scene work, blocking, and running the show. I wrote the story, and Bobby helped me in writing the dialogue. Though there is a script, we all believe in the importance of improvisation, so the show changed every performance. Bobby was the only actor who spoke directly to the audience and each night he would quickly get a feel for the audience and would cater some of the dialogue to their specific needs and reactions. Though some dialogue changed, it is important to know that the story ALWAYS remained the same! Ethan worked on transitional music and even worked on some original pieces for the show. After a ton of work, we added lights, technical elements, and props. Before we knew it, we had a show. Through the process, I learned a great deal about directing, collaborating, and even acting. The actors faced obstacles that I needed to help them overcome. Because I am also primarily an actor, I could relate with the actor's struggles and successes throughout the process. Carlie had a fear of vulnerability on stage, Kate was scared of intimacy with another actor, Bobby was afraid of not being funny, and Kayla was scared of being too big and too bold. Together we

tried to tackle all of these fears and overcome them. In comparing the beginning of the process to the final performance, their progress is undeniable.

As a team, we created a poignant piece of theatre that explored the complexity of human romantic relationships. Bobby, the central character, narrated and spoke directly to the audience members, which encouraged the audience to connect and empathize with him. While this show chronicled his character's personal journey in relationships, there is great universality to be found in the honesty of *Lovers, Liars, and Clowns* (I hope). I credit this to the collaborative nature of the process and the openness and personal investment of each person involved. The reason I love theatre is because every night each performer, designer, and audience member has their own unique experience, and they walk away moved in a different way. My worst enemy in theatre is apathy. I would much prefer someone hated my show rather than somebody leaving my show feeling nothing.

Lovers, Liars, and Clowns opened to great reviews and wonderful feedback. In fact, it was nominated by faculty and students for the BSU Portfolio Creativity and Innovation Award! Everything seemed to be going amazingly well, and then, the third night, Kayla became very ill, and her voice was almost all gone. The next day Bobby, the lead, was diagnosed with bronchitis, and he was unable to perform for the Saturday matinee. This performance was rescheduled for Sunday night. I was filled with sheer horror when I realized a performance had to be canceled. I had to face the crowd and inform that we had to take Bobby to the medical center, and that I was terribly sorry for the inconvenience. It broke my heart to let people down, but I did not have much time to wallow in sadness because I had to take Bobby to the doctor and help him recover for the

evening performance that Bill Jenkins, our Theatre Department chair, informed me “could not be canceled.” So, we all arrived early, and in the true spirit of *LLC*, we all came together to find a solution to support one another.

Though performing is my art of choice, ironically, I have never been as proud as I was the day my show opened. My cast, musical director, and I came together to write, create, and perform our own original show. I, Kaitlin Fumarolo, along with some now close friends, CREATED ART. We did not just perform it, we did EVERYTHING, and it felt so good. I am a performer, and yet I found myself drawn to directing. Now I don’t know what I want! Perhaps, I will do both! Even though there was so much drama and controversy throughout the whole process, I would not trade any of it for the world. This was by far the most rewarding experience in my undergraduate career.

Please enjoy perusing the Archive Photo CD, the Sondheim CD from which we drew our inspiration, and the DVD of our final dress rehearsal. Sit back, relax, and watch the original musical theatre cabaret, *Lovers, Liars, and Clowns!*

Kaitlin Fumarolo
Directing Proposal
March 15, 2006

Songs for a New World
Jason Robert Brown

Musical Numbers

A New World (all four, M1, M2, W1, W2)
On the Deck of Spanish Sailing Ship 1492 (M1, W1)
Just One Step (W2)
I'm Not Afraid of Anything (W1)
The River Won't Flow (M2 w/full chorus)
Stars and the Moon (W2)
She Cries (M2)
Steam Train (M1 w/ full company)
The World was Dancing (M2, W1-full company)
Surabaya Santa (W2)
Christmas Lullaby (W1)
King of the World (M1 and company)
Give it All for You (M2, W1)
Flag Maker 1775 (W2)
Flying Home (M1 and company)
Here My Song (full company)

1. Textual Analysis:

(a)

Songs for a New World is a musical revue, and as such, it does not follow a climactic plot structure. Therefore, I will be unable to break down this musical using the same textual script analysis as could be applied to more traditional plays. Having said that, I do believe that there is a natural arc to this show that is revealed by the music – both its technical structure (tempos, harmonies, etc.) as well as each song's narrative. The way I see it, the four actors of *Songs for a New World* create a unit much like a classical Greek chorus. While there is not the singularity of journey which usually unites a chorus, the four actors are all vehicles through which someone's story will be brought to life; it is only within each individual story that they are differentiated.

This element of many voices melding together for the purpose of storytelling is introduced in the very first song, "A New World." This song sets us up for the

conventions of the revue. Each actor sings about that “one moment” when each and every one of us is forced to face the life ahead of us. As an audience, this song immediately lets us know that we are going to be presented with a patchwork quilt of stories that address this idea of that “moment.” The actors are united in their purpose of exploring different variations on this theme, though the characters they portray are vastly different from each other.

Every song relates back the concept of a “moment” in our lives, instances in which we are forced to take a step in a direction that longer subscribes to the path we once dreamed we would follow. In that first song, the actors are simply a chorus, nameless, faceless and lacking identity. This sense of the general provides the audience with the ideological foundation with which the rest of the play must be approached – that these stories could be our stories. All human beings have an instinctive reaction to these moments of crisis and decision. Some adapt, some cry out for help, some succumb, and some fight it like all hell, but we all have to face these moments.

The first couple of musical numbers reinforce this idea, focusing on the mysterious strength and hope that some have found within themselves at such times. “I’m Not Afraid of Anything” is a prime example. In this song, the audience is presented with a woman who at first draws them in with banter about her family and friends’ fears that is both witty and entertaining as well as exposing a looming inexplicable tension. As the song progresses, she divulges, after great struggle, her torment that that her lover, named David, has fears that are damaging their relationship. He is afraid to hold her and trust her, and she finally admits to herself

that “he will always be, he’s afraid of me.” Yet through her tears, she once again proclaims that she is “not afraid of anything.” Clearly this woman is not as problem-free as she initially appears, and yet there is a sense that she will be continue to attempt to find comfort in a belief of her own “fearlessness” which helped her in the past. She lives by means of denial, and it seems that she will cling to this method as her way of coping, even though, for the issue at hand, her inability to face this fear is problematic. Despite this, a sense of her strength, however she has found it, pervades.

“Stars and the Moon” is another song early on in the show that, though it evokes a strange pity for the woman, does not compel fear for the character’s well being. This woman ended up getting everything she ever wanted, but ultimately realized that she wanted all the wrong things. Yet, though she acknowledges her despair, we do not sense her as someone who is completely crumbling. She does not give way. She will get by on her yacht and her caviar and her money and the audience is not invited to seriously “worry” about her.

The shift in *Songs for a New World* occurs in the song “The World was Dancing.” In this song, the whole cast is engaged and the show changes drastically. As an audience our sense of the world changes; we no longer sees characters that can hold it together. Instead, the audience is forced to look in the face of characters who are no longer able to deny or combat their given circumstances. There is a quality to this song akin to that of a broken music box. This song is performed and there is a encompassing sense that the wrongs that have been committed cannot be righted ever again. This sense of something irreparably broken is emphasized in

“King of the World,” as a man pleads with any one listening to give him back his life, give him his freedom and make him the man he “used to be.”

Even “I’d Give It All For You,” what could be termed as the most hopeful song of the second half, has an increased intensity to it, and there is evidence to lead us to the conclusion that these characters are not truly, despite their passionate cries, going to be able to fix what went wrong in their relationship. The two singers proclaim their love without any real solution to what initially drove them apart.

The final individual story in the patchwork quilt is the song “I’ll Be Flying Home.” This song identifies a man who has lost someone he loves terribly, and whose only relief from the pain of this loss is to die himself. There is a sense of counterpoint, because the melody could be perceived as uplifting. However, the audience is never allowed to forget that this man’s only hope is death.

There is an overwhelming feeling in this show that these characters do not just *want* to tell these stories - they absolutely *need* to tell them. In the show’s conclusion, this idea is driven home with the last piece, “Hear My Song.” Once again, we are confronted with a group of individuals without specific “faces,” reconnecting once again to the idea of the cast as a Greek chorus. These helps guide the show to a feeling of a completed journey. Furthermore, “Hear My Song” carries with it a message that unites all various characters which have appeared on stage – that there is a sense of hope to be gained in the telling of these stories. There is a universality to the “moments” depicted in the revue. As the show has climaxes towards characters that are more and more broken, we are still left with the feeling

that despite the varying degrees of our own individual strife as human beings, there is something almost holy to the act of telling this story, to the act of theatre itself.

(b) Character breakdowns:

The cast is comprised of a group of actors that form the aforementioned “Greek chorus” through whom a variety of characters come to life. The individual characters for each song have guidelines based on their music and lyrics; however, nowhere are characters identified by names, ages, places or times. Only the circumstances surrounding each character are identified. Thus, creating the specifics of each singer is something I want to define with the cast as we progress. There are so many possibilities within each song for character choices. In “I’m Not Afraid of Anything,” for example, the text indicates that this is a woman who is in love with a man named David. However, her specific history with him, his place in her life, and what she needs from him to make this fear go away are all undefined. This leaves me great creative freedom which I would like to use as I work with the actor to develop all the various characters.

(c) Major Thematic Ideas

In addition to the aforesaid idea of the importance of a moment and the importance of storytelling, there are a variety of thematic issues that are explored in this play. There is a message that human beings will be unable to make productive choices in their lives until they know who they are and what they stand for. In addition, the show addresses the frailty as well as the necessity of human

relationships. It questions our need as human beings to connect with each other on an almost spiritual level, our fear of being alone at the end of the day, and the trials and tribulations associated with our innate drive to understand and to be understood, to love and to be loved. Most of all there is an overarching need for communication. The characters are all so driven by their need to express out loud what they are going through that they are moved to song. This is the basis for all good musical theatre, this idea that in order to process the world, we must articulate the storms within ourselves – and that the storm is so great, words are no longer enough; thus, we must sing.

2. Casting requirements: two men, two women, unspecified race of varying vocal ability.

3. Technical Challenges: I do not foresee any technical challenges other than locating musicians to play in the orchestra. The space of the cave is perfect for this revue, because it has an “etch-a-sketch” quality to it. The show is about a blank slate that is wiped clean after nearly every song as a new character is introduced.

Lovers, Liars, & Clowns

Story by
Kaitlin Fumarolo

Written by
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(Based on, Side By Side By Sondheim)

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After the opening dialogue, it is time
to open the show with a ridiculous
SONDHEIM MEDLEY.

As the medley comes to an end, BOBBY, the evening's
storyteller, takes a step forward and cuts off the other
SINGERS.

BOBBY

Alright, that was absolutely ridiculous and I'm sure everyone
is asking, "What the hell just happened!?"
I did have a point to butcher of some of the greatest musical
theatre songs of the last fifty years. I did that on
purpose, I wanted everyone to experience the most ridiculous
aspect of what might happen tonight so that the rest of the
evening and my story seems believable and real...which it is.
All random goofiness aside I want to talk to you about my
life changing experience. That term is used so loosely these
days, life changing experience. Now people watch an episode
of Oprah or Dr. Phil and have a life changing experience.
Mine is an old fashion life changing experience. I didn't
have to read a book or watch tv to realize what happened...I
lived it. I'm a nobody. I blend in. I don't stick out and
I pay my taxes. I'm an average guy but it only took two days
to world to turn upside down. It all began on a Sunday a
year ago. A day that should have been the happiest of my
life.

BOBBY walks upstage to a church
dressing room. He puts on a button up
shirt and begins to button it.

NOT GETTING MARRIED TODAY.

After the song, BOBBY is in disbelief
at what just happened. He takes a
moment then slowly walks back to the
audience.

BOBBY

(still in disbelief)

How could I face my family...her family? What was I suppose
to do? Knock her out, slip the dress on her, and drag her
down the aisle? Its one of those moments where you are so
angry and upset but you just can't process anything so you go
comatose and anything anybody asks you, your response is,
"Oh, I'm fine," or "It's gonna be alright." Then you get
home, get situated, and what are you surrounded by? Unopened
presents that need to be returned, champagne bottles with
labels that say "Bobby and Amy", cucumber platters for 300
guests, and that's just my living room.

BOBBY walks into his living room and begins to organize presents, food trays, etc. He hears a knock on the door and answers it. It is his friend, ALEX, still in the dress from BOBBY's wedding.

ALEX

Can I take this now?

BOBBY

Only if I can watch.

ALEX sings *HEY OLD FRIENDS*.

BOBBY

Thanks for stopping by but I have so much to go through. I don't want to keep you.

ALEX

I understand. Give me a call if you need me.

BOBBY

I will.

ALEX kisses BOBBY on the forehead then leaves.

BOBBY sings *LOSING MY MIND*.

AMY sings *NOT A DAY GOES BY*.

BOBBY

I needed to escape...to get away from everything!

(he laughs)

I took a walk to relax. There's a park about half mile from my apartment building so I walked there and...well I ran into someone one who totally shook things up a little bit more.

APRIL sings *ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE*.

APRIL sits next to BOBBY.

APRIL

Can you help me find the Trelston Hotel.

BOBBY

Yeah sure. You just take Main up to Kennedy then take a right. Go about two, two and a half blocks then take a left on Lyndon. After three stop lights take a right and the hotel will be on the left side of the road.

APRIL

So I take Main to where?

BOBBY

I'm not doing much, I could just walk you there.

APRIL

Really? That would be great. I'm April by the way.

BOBBY

Nice to meet you. I'm Bobby.

The two walk off together, then BOBBY turns to the audience.

BOBBY

I figured I could walk with her to the hotel. She seemed nice. We stopped by a restaurant, got some food, then talked. I offered my apartment so she wouldn't have to pay for a hotel. So after a few drinks we went back to my place.

BOBBY gets APRIL and the two enter his apartment.

APRIL

(seeing his apartment)

Wow. This is nice place for a being a grocery clerk.

BOBBY

I make minimum wage go a long way.

APRIL sees all the presents and favors from the wedding.

APRIL

What's all this stuff?

BOBBY

Oh, my birthday was a couple days ago. I haven't had time to open them all.

APRIL

Well, happy birthday. Do you mind if I get changed.

BOBBY

Uh...sure. You use my bedroom

APRIL goes to his hallway and stops. She gives him a look that shows she is unsure which room is his.

BOBBY

It's the one that isn't my bathroom....use your instincts.

BOBBY walks to the audience.

BOBBY

I didn't think I did anything wrong. She was nice. She was extremely attractive, another plus. I was a bachelor again, so no foul there. Nothing was going to happen anyway.

(he thinks)

But she was in there a long time so I checked up on her to make sure she was okay. What happened next I shouldn't have done...but I did.

BOBBY walks back to his bedroom. They sing *GOD THAT'S GOOD*. APRIL exits the bedroom and sings *FOXTROT*.

BOBBY comes out of the bedroom into the living room.

BOBBY

What happened to drinks.

APRIL

I was hungry.

(lifts tray)

Carrot?

BOBBY

I'm fine. Champagne?

APRIL

Sure. Who is Amy?

BOBBY

Oh, it's the brand. Really cheap.

BOBBY removes the label then gives APRIL the bottle.

APRIL

What do you want to do?

BOBBY

Well, I have a TV in my bedroom.

APRIL

Hmm.

The two walk back into BOBBY's bedroom.

An alarm beeps. APRIL gets up without waking BOBBY. As she gathers her stuff, BOBBY wakes up and they sing *BARCELONA*.

BOBBY go to audience.

BOBBY

What the hell?! I didn't know what I was suppose to do...so I called the only person who might.

BOBBY walks back to his living room and waits for ALEX. She knocks, he answers, and ALEX sings *BOY FROM*.

BOBBY takes out the garbage during the song. ALEX finishes the song.

BOBBY

(from off stage)

Alex, I think I locked myself out.

She lets him in then he walks to audience once more.

BOBBY

I felt bad calling her over so late. I didn't think anybody liked me. You know the feeling?...when you seem to be getting under everybody's skin.

At this moment the music for *YOU COULD DRIVE A PERSON CRAZY* begins.

BOBBY

I felt like I was an inconvenience.

(he notices music)

Do you hear that? Anyway, I felt like I was driving everyone away.

(notices music again)

I swear I hear some kind of strange music with eerie voices calling my name. No? Okay, I just feel like I'm going nuts and I'm dragging everyone down with me.

BOBBY turns to see the group of women behind him. He backs away and sits down in the audience for the next song, *YOU COULD DRIVE A PERSON CRAZY*.

After the song is over, BOBBY stands and talks to the audience.

BOBBY

Wow! Well, it's moments like that that I'm glad we had the beginning medley. Getting back on track, Alex was still at my apartment, it was well past midnight and I hadn't even thanked her for coming.

BOBBY walks to ALEX. He sings *WITH SO LITTLE TO BE SURE OF*.

After BOBBY sings he approaches ALEX as if he is going to kiss her. She readies for the embrace but he only gives an Eskimo kiss. As her heart breaks she sings *OLD FRIENDS II/SEND IN THE CLOWNS*.

After the ALEX's songs, she leaves.

APRIL enters and sings *TRUMPETS*. After her song she exits.

BOBBY enters his apartment and hears someone at the door. It's AMY.

AMY

Hey.

BOBBY

Hey.

AMY

I'm so sorry, Bobby.

AMY
No it's not fine.
You don't
understand how bad
I feel. I'm so
sorry.

BOBBY
It's fine. It's
what you needed.
It's really fine!

BOBBY

Amy, stop it! Just give me a second.

BOBBY leaves AMY alone in the living room.

They sing *WE HAD A GOOD THING GOING*.

After song, BOBBY goes to the audience for one last time.

BOBBY

It was so hard. I wanted to just grab and hold her but I let her go. I ended up alone. Sometimes that's then with someone living in false hope. Now don't get me wrong. We all need somebody. We need someone to support us and be there. Someone to give us real love. Think about that. Think about who you are. So who are you? Are you the best friend? Do you think about everyone but yourself?

You make sure everyone has happiness then you end up left out. Are you the wanderer? Are you scared of giving love to one person so instead you give a little bit of yourself to numerous people? Or are you inconsistent? You want love but you're too afraid to commit but when you are finally ready, it isn't there anymore. Who am I?

Bobby then goes into BEING ALIVE.